

MERCATOR:

O R,

Commerce Retrieved,

B E I N G

CONSIDERATIONS on the State of the *British* Trade, &c.

From Saturday, June 19. to Tuesday, June 22. 1714.

Most of what is published, either of State or Trade, is so partial to Parties that no Notice is to be taken of it.

Yet it is necessary that the People should be undeceived.

A Letter reprinted from the Flying-Post.

The Case of our Jamaica Merchants, trading to New Spain, stated.

They know their Fate if they are taken.

They go at their own Risque.

Our Governours ought to stop and prevent them, but they wink at it.

They are in the same Predicament of Trade as the French Owlers on the Coast of Kent.

THO' most of what is said by the present Writers of the Town against Matters, either of State or Commerce, is mingled with such evident Malice, that it merits no Consideration, and therefore the *MERCATOR* has taken very little Notice of such Things; yet as the poor innocent People of this Nation are frequently imposed upon to believe by these specious strange Stories, contrary to the Nature and Reason of Things: So it is needful on many Accounts to set the Truth in some Cases in a clear Light, that the Fact being separated from the Party-Gloss put upon it, for carrying on a particular Frenzy of the Times, People may know how to judge for themselves, and may know who deceives them, and who not.

This respects a Letter or pretended Letter lately publish'd in one of our weekly printed Oracles from Jamaica concerning a Sloop from Jamaica, which was trepan'd by the Spaniards, in offering to Trade upon their Coast; and being seized, was carried in and confiscated, &c. as by the Letter, which because they shall have the full Story told their own way. The *MERCATOR* has printed Word for Word from their own Copy as follows.

SIR, Jamaica, March 27. 1714.

WE were under the highest Expectation of reaping considerable Advantages in our Trade from the Peace with Spain, when we were surprized with the following and unexpected barbarous Usage given to the Macclesfield, Capt. Barlow Commander, bound from Guiny to this Island; he was surprized by a violent Hurricane, in which he lost his Masts, and having several Foot of Water in his Hold, was in this pitiful Condition forced into Porto Rico, where instead of friendly Assistance, the Crew were seized and imprisoned, his Ship and Cargo condemned as Prize, and sold.

Capt. Thornton in a Trading Sloop belonging to this Island, having a Cargo of 10000 l. being on the Spanish Coast, several Merchants came on Board at Four in the Afternoon, and agreed for all his Cargo, promising by the

next Morning to bring the Money and pay for every thing before they were hoisted over the Side; This Appearance made the Captain and Company think themselves secure, which occasioned their being surprized in the Night by two Periagoes, armed with 90 Men who carried them into Port, and condemned and sold them as Prize, excusing their Treachery by the express Orders of the King their Master, to serve all English Traders in that manner, and that they had four French Men of War with Spanish Commissions on their Coasts, as Guardships, to intercept all English Traders.

I can't omit to acquaint you with the good Fortune of Mr. Tho. Wood, who by the Honesty of the Governor of Petty Guavas, saved his Sloop and 120 Negroes, the Governor sending him Word, not to expose a Negroe to sale, for if he did he should be obliged to seize him, and make him Prize, it being the express Orders of his King so to use all English Ships, and not to suffer any to Trade, and advised him to be gone out of the Port, which the other wisely did.

Thus you see what friendly Usage we are like to receive from our new Allies, and to what a low Ebb we must quickly be reduced, if her Majesty don't speedily give us leave to use Reprisals. I shall conclude with desiring you to believe that I am,

SIR, Your most humble Servant,

R. T.

Now supposing all this to be true, the *MERCATOR* undertakes to prove, that this is nothing but what the Spaniards ought to do, and that they would have done the same even in King CHARLES II's Time; Nay in the Time of King William, when we were in League Offensive and Defensive with them and fighting for them, and that they, the *MERCATOR* says it again, ought to have done it. Nor has the English any reason to quarrel with Spain about it; and farther the *MERCATOR* says, the like has many times been attempted, and often executed in the said Reign of King CHARLES II. and King William;

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neither did the Government ever resent it, or demand Restitution, but acquiesced in the ruin of the People concern'd, giving them up to Justice as Criminals, that by the Laws of that Country ought to suffer Death, and by solemn Treaty and Agreement were to suffer Death.

If this be the Truth of the Fact, then these Amusements are scandalous, and the Clamour raised by these Men has much about as much in it as there usually is in most of the rest they publish of the same kind. The Case in short stands thus abridg'd, the *MERCATOR* having not room to give it at large in this narrow Compass.

By the ancient Treaty of Peace with Spain, the Treaty of Commerce for the Spanish West-Indies was thus settled, (viz.) That it should not be lawful for the Subjects of England, on any Account whatsoever, to carry on any Trade with, or come into any of the Ports of the Spanish West-Indies, on pain of Confiscation of Ship and Goods, and the Men to be proceeded against by the ordinary course of Justice.

It is true, that notwithstanding this stipulation, our Merchants of Jamaica have always carried on a clandestine Trade with the Spaniards, which they have done upon the just Risque of their Lives, Ships and Goods, contrary to express Injunctions from hence; and tho' too much Connivance has been given by Governors and Commanders of Men of War, and the manner of their Trade is well known, yet as to the English Government, it is all by stealth, and they are to be, and ought to be punished, even by our Governors at Jamaica, if known.

It is not to the present purpose, to enquire here into the Nature and Reason of this Law; it is the same thing with us in our Plantations, where, if we did not preserve the Property of our Trade entire, without permitting any other Nations to Trade with us, we should soon lose our Plantation-Trade, and have other Nations run away with the Commerce, leaving to us only the Charge of maintaining them.

But to bring this a little nearer to us as English; Was it not upon the foot of this Treaty with Spain, that King William was obliged to abandon the Scots in their Settlement at Darien, and tho' as King of Scotland he had granted them a Charter or Patent to encourage that Settlement, yet as King of England and an Ally of Spain, he was obliged by the Treaty then subsisting, to forbid his English Subjects to correspond with those of Darien, or afford them any Relief, Sustainance, Assistance or Provision? By which means when their Ships came in a perishing Condition to Jamaica, they were, as the Scots said, most Inhumanely used, which, by the way, may answer for the Vessels which they alledge was driven into New Spain by Distress; of which more may be said in its turn.

But to return to the Case in hand; The Trade from Jamaica to the Spanish Coast is thus carryed on; The Sloops take in great Cargoes of English Goods, and Sail

into the Gulph of Mexico to certain Places, where they come within view of the Shores in the Night only, in the Day they ply off and on, as they call it, to be out of sight. The Merchants Spaniards, who know the meaning of it, and who find it to their Advantage to Trade, go off in the Night in Canoes, Periagua's, and such small Boats, and carry ready Money with them, fetch on shore their Goods at their own Risque, i. e. the Spanish Merchants Risque.

Our Sloops do this, because they know they cannot go into Port, for if they do they are taken; also if any Ship of Force should come, they must trust to their Oars or be taken, and that if they are taken, they are used as Enemies, &c. as by the Letter.

Now the Question before us, is not how these Men were trepann'd into the Spaniards hand, but whether it was a lawful Action, according to Treaty and Agreement, that the Spaniards should take them if they could; if that appears, then every Stratagem the Spaniards could use to get them into their Clutches, was just and allowable.

A parallel Case to this is on our own Coast every Day, where the French, with Snares and Sloops, come upon the Coast of Kent and Sussex to fetch off our Wooll; which is, in the Jamaica dialect, only to Trade with us. Now if our Cruising Smacks on the Coast, or Boats from the Shore, could Snap these Men, did we not always Confiscate the Vessels, and send the Men to Jail, and the like, notwithstanding we were at Peace with them as a Nation? Nor did their King ever Demand them again, or grant Reprisals, for they are esteem'd as a Sett of Trade Thieves, and used accordingly; nay, while the Act which made Exporting Wooll to be Felony was in force, they might lawfully have been Hanged by us, without any Affront to the King of France, and so might our Jamaica Gentlemen, without any Unkindness or Injustice on the Side of the Spaniards.

The *MERCATOR* appeals to the Body of Jamaica Merchants for the Truth of this; and therefore for the wise Publisher of this Story to talk of using Reprisals, is the same thing as if the King of France should grant Reprisals against us for Punishing his Outlers when they are taken.

But these Reprisals the Law will allow us to take, (viz.) That if the Spaniards send any Ships to New-York, New-England, Virginia, or the like, and bringing European Goods, will offer to Sell them there, nay, if they put in there, on what Account it will, stress of Weather, or what it will, we shall use them in the same kind.

We have a like Instance of this in its degree, when King Charles II. in a time of Peace, sent Sir John Narborough, with Three Men of War, to make Discoveries in the South-Seas; of all which the *MERCATOR* shall speak farther.



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